The cover story of a 1989 issue of Time magazine asked, "Is Government Dead?" Since then, similar questions about the raison d’être of government are being asked by other pundits and publications around the world. Eminent scholars and popular journalists alike have noticed many disturbing trends which show that government is not what it used to be. Once the exclusive domain of statesmen and politicians, government has now become too important and incontinent to be left to the governments alone.

Canadians, as evidenced by the books under review here, have been part of the trend. For some, the crisis of governance is a passing phase of the growing pains into post-industrial, while for others it may be the terminal illness of a dying civilization. Reality probably lies closer to the middle of the two positions. Although there is much that is wrong with government, rumors of its imminent demise are premature.

Here, I examine only the tip of this massive discussion about the deteriorating political climate and declining governmental role in post-modern societies, by perusing two thousand pages of its latest annual crop. The five books listed above are of particular interest because they consist of compiled reports or edited anthologies that involve the expertise of up to a hundred specialists in political science or public administration. They are therefore quite representative of the academic discourse and professional discord surrounding this issue, both in Canada and abroad.

The present problem of governance is the product of a general ecocleptological (political environment) dominated by administrative and institutional malfunctions of the state machinery. Legislation, taxation and coercion, the leviathanically available by governments, are now increasingly ineffective. How are societies to govern themselves as they enter the new millennium?

Within this wide range of problems, the essays in Federalism & the New World Order concentrate on national and regional levels. The articles contained in Canada’s Century: Governance in a Maturing Society focus particularly on Quebec and Canada, while Our Global Neighbourhood offers a more comparative and international perspective. Changing Maps: Governing in a World of Rapid Change examines the broadly social aspects of politics, while Governance in a Changing Environment focuses on the strictly technical side of government.

Certainly, the basic thesis of all contributors is that the ability of the polity to control society and economy has deteriorated over the years. The conclusion that there is indeed something rotten in the realm of governance is inescapable, but I would say that the unpleasant smell emanating from government seems to be a symptom of a larger social pathology. It is not only government, but everything that seems to be changing rapidly and radically nowadays. Concerned citizens, as well as committed professionals, have noticed that we are right in the midst of a fundamental social transformation whose extent and implications can only be weakly grasped.

Indeed, many macrohistorians are saying that all major trends at the turn of this millennium point toward the end of an era and the beginning of another. In their terms, our epoch marks the transition from the modern industrial to the post-modern technological age. It is said that the ideal of modernity has lost its legitimacy and credibility, thus creating a cultural vacuum which begs to be filled by a novel and as yet unknown paradigm. It seems that we are blessed (or cursed) to live in very interesting times of dramatic and paradigmatic change. It therefore behooves us, as citizens and understand what is going on, so that we can at least improve our chances of survival, even if we cannot control our eventual destiny.

The books under review here try to do just that by presenting a diagnosis and prognosis of our modern malaise, as well as proposing an historical etiology and post-modern therapy.

As early as Nietzsche, who is credited with launching the first incisive critique of modernity, post-modern thought developed into a_pool of creative ideas, destructive ideologies, ardent arguments, brilliant insights, stupid arguments and pretentious lectures. Post-modernism has become a source of an immense emotional energy and, at the same time, a colossal intellectual mess. But, as in the case of God, post-modern pronouncements about the death of government are somewhat exaggerated. So, without engaging in futile arguments into the labyrinthine aspects of post-modernism, these books highlight its more serious political elements.

As Alfred North Whitehead observed, great ideas often appear in strange guise and disgusting company. The same insight was conveyed by Daniel Yankelovich in Changing Maps: Governing in a World of Rapid Change in retelling the crude old joke of a farmer digging into a huge pile of manure. When asked why he kept digging, he replied: "Because there's a pony under all this hooft." Let us then try to uncover the best ideas hidden under all this verbiage.

To begin with, the experts brought together in these five collections agree that the world is in disequilibrium, if not desperate disorder. In order to support this thesis, they break down reality into a few ecologically interdependent dimensions, and indicate to what extent national borders have become permeable and governments vulnerable to transnational forces. The extraordinary monetary mobility forces governments to engage in intense competition to attract investment funds by interest inflation, tax concession and labor restriction. In spite of industrial strategies and sectorial subsidies, complex economies become more chaotic and regulation resistant, so that government intervention is as often not ineffective or even counter-productive. The concurrent phenomena of high unemployment, inflation and depression, have negated conventional wisdom and Keynesian finance of how governments can manipulate the economy.

In order to manage their complicated problems, politicians were forced to hand over power to a vast civil service of career professionals. Modern government has developed into numerous technocracies unaccountable to the people they are supposed to represent. This situation creates a democratic deficit described by everybody and denied by none.

Moreover, as many of the essays in Changing Maps: Governing in a World of...
The widespread disenchantment with government means that they can neither rise up to the gigantic tasks facing them, nor respond to the heavy demands put upon them. Consequently, the deteriorating climate has evolved into a full anti-government gale. As a result, its response to demands deteriorates, thus creating a vicious circle of increasing needs and decreasing abilities. The widespread disenchantment with government means that they can neither rise up to the gigantic tasks facing them, nor respond to the heavy demands put upon them. Consequently, the deteriorating climate has evolved into a full anti-government gale. As a result, its response to demands deteriorates, thus creating a vicious circle of increasing needs and decreasing abilities. The widespread disenchantment with government means that they can neither rise up to the gigantic tasks facing them, nor respond to the heavy demands put upon them. Consequently, the deteriorating climate has evolved into a full anti-government gale. As a result, its response to demands deteriorates, thus creating a vicious circle of increasing needs and decreasing abilities.
for its impotence and incompetence. The postmodern ideologies tried to explain this puzzling situation. Although, since the demise of Marxism, neoliberalism now dominates the discourse of academic discussion, both classic liberalism and orthodox Marxism assumed that if man is given the choice, he would put economic prosperity before culture, or culture before economic prosperity. Accordingly, outside utopian models, it is more natural for economic man to strive for wealth and security than for virtue and loyalty.

But the logic of politics is not the same as that of either economics or ethics. Their often antithetical values of popularity, profit and patrimony create impossible dilemmas of prioritization. Traditional cultures set the standards we use to measure their accommodation to nature. But the principal values of modern industrial or commercial culture by attempting to master nature, drive people to a Faustian bargain that ultimately threatens to destroy them.

Francis Fukuyama’s explicitly Hegelian thesis that the globalization of western liberal democracy is the final form of human government, thus leaves a lot to be desired. Such triumphalism does not face the facts of collective suicide by ecological collapse, ruinous competition among nations, widening disparities in standards of living, and breakdown of authority as the poisoned legacy of decaying empire. As Peter Leslie writes in Canada’s Century: Governance in a Maturing Society, the explanations of liberalism as well as Marxism, are outmoded because they do not consider the difficulties inherent in realizing their ideal visions.

These inevitable difficulties stem from the inherent inconsistencies of human nature and physical reality. Sociopolitical problems stem from a functional necessity to balance contradictory values, such as equality and equity, efficiency and liberty, and security and individuality. The deep challenges confronting governance are not just managerial or organizational, but human and historical. Moreover, all problems have now become more complex and wicked than ever before, so governments simply do not and cannot know how to solve them.

The demanding tasks of economic efficiency to fight structural unemployment, political legitimacy to face participation pressures, and social solidarity to forge state responsibility are almost impossible to fulfill at the same time or place, because of their inherent and inescapable contradictions. Caught between opposing pressures, both rationality and responsibility, security and liberty, governments have been painted into the corner of a no-win situation from which there is no real escape.

Yet, l’Etat c’est nous! We the people, by sowing our separate individual acts are now reaping their cumulative effects. The failure, then, does not belong to government but to the policies and practices of its constituents. These contradictions are both dependent and independent variables in the causal chain, because they are the intervening factors of various forces acting upon society. But when they are expected to do the impossible, they cannot but fail miserably. It is thus incumbent upon us to realize that our governments, however, are only one aspect of the problem and try to solve our problems within the bounds of our imperfect knowledge, most morality and limited power.

So where do we go from here? We must look ahead to see what may be coming, so that we may prevent or prepare for it. Demographic statistics, as we saw, point out the global population explosion which multiplied our numbers sixfold in two centuries. Given this trend, it is foreseen that the present population will double once again by 2045. Obviously such accelerated increase must cancel out our potential for progress for most of the world. Resource scarcity and efficient supply conspire to ensure that the bulk of the world’s population cannot follow in the steps of the vanguard west and hope to live like it. The ecologic and economic repercussions of such demands are bound to be catastrophic merely for trying to carry them out. The question here then is how are governments to handle the crises arising from such impossible social services.

Developed from the fiscal and social crisis of post-industrialism, the new ideology of public management reform is primarily concerned with increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service. Most reformers make performance the central value against which to judge the regulation and legislation of commerce and control administration. The US National Performance Review and Vice-President Al Gore’s performance project are outstanding examples of this trend.

No longer able to afford expensive government, some countries have gone further to propose a new social contract between state and people. Governance in a Changing Environment tells us that the UK Citizen’s Charter, the US Charter of Social Publics, and the Canadian Public Service 2000 study emphasize Total Quality Management, treating the citizens as clients, society of advanced post-industrial age.

-Natural Windjammer Eden: a conservator society of optimal ecological ecology.
-Traditional HMS Bounty: a hierarchical society of rigid elite-mass coexistence.
-Doomed Titanic Disaster: an entropic 1984 society of environ mental catastrophe.

Of these, the Starship and Bounty scenarios may be the most probable, because they are the optimistic and pessimistic extensions of present trends. On the other hand, the Bounty and Titanic are the most deplorable, because they deprived and deprived conditions are asymptotic and do not converge. This leaves the Starship and Windjammer options as the most desirable, on the basis of the axiom of common standard combining social cohesion and optimal distribution.

On that basis, the next step is to determine how to realize such ideal. Although the Starship model seems more existing and glamorous, many people prefer the windjammer as more suitable for a sustainable human development. Most writers agree that mobilizing the collective power of people to make life more democratic, secure and lasting is the foremost challenge of our generation.

This difficult task requires three things: the enunciation of core values which respect life, liberty, justice, integrity, and community; the legitimation of civic morals which assign common rights and shared responsibilities to all; and the adaptation of international laws which limit state sovereignty.

To attain these goals, Richard Simeon proposes in Canada’s Century: Governance in a Maturing Society deep social reforms which empower citizens and fuse authority in each country, as well as free trade and related relations everywhere on Earth. The world society will have to assume greater responsibility to predict what is multifaceted strategy of planetary governance which enables international institutions to articulate complex interdependencies, such as world law, promote common security, manage economic interdependence and above all sustain social development.

Putting these principles into practice, particular suggestions have been made to reform the UN system, now in its Golden Jubilee, Documented in Our Global Neigh bors: these include institutional enlarging and restructuring the highly political Security Council to promote world peace and direct a permanent volunteer peacekeeping force; complementing it with an economic Security Council to promote sustainable development. Next, transforming the Trusteeship Council into an earth protector along with a Global Environmental Facility which is responsible for planetary ecology. The Assembly and Security Assembly with direct taxation powers and an INGO Advisory Council to eliminate the national status of states.

If the Kantian hypothesis that democracies are unlikely to fight each other is correct, democratization is the best road to world security. It is a road that will affect majorities and minorities, democratic politics empowers minorities to challenge majorities without resorting to violence or oppression. The main purpose of democratic legislation, according to Alan Cairns in
Canada's Capacity: Governance in a Mutating Society is not to express lofty ideals but to create practical means to readily and repeatedly address human rights and clashing group interests. If people have a right to security, then states must find the means a priori to provide it by collectively preventing, remedying, and redressing social conflicts. The concept of common security has added educational and occupationally driven social programs of public order and military defense; thereby assigning to governments the tasks of preparing and providing essential work for everybody, by matching unfilled social needs with the available labor supplies. Still, Christopher Pollitt in Governance in a Changing Environment notes that these common security functions involve the most resource-intensive parts of the public sector, therefore the least scalable for narrow scope managerial techniques or formulaic treatments. It follows that we should expect and encourage an organizational variety in the public sector. Simple and sweeping solutions, in reinventing or privatizing government, cannot solve the problem. PatriciaLogan's (in the current selection) conclusion argues that no public management reform can be merely technical or purely manageable. It must inevitably be tied to the quality of governance and the loyalty of its citizen. For that reason, many contributors look at the quality of their community, rather than merely political, reform as the core aim. Reform exemplified by Amitai Etzioni's natural community movement in Changing Maps: Governing in a World of Rapid Change. In contrast to both liberal individualism and conservative nationalism, communityism is a social activity to change people's morals and civics towards a more fraternal society. This involves shared values, reduced disparities and pooled challenges in the necessary process of creating and maintaining any strong community. In order to succeed in building such community, the most reliable predictor or critical factor is the existence of norms of reciprocity and networks of engagement: a desire to cooperate in pursuit of associations which serve as the social capital of civic trust and mutual help. Only within the framework of a community spirit can a holistic development become sustainable. Economic, wealth and political power are the effects of social health, not its causes. Once a systemic equilibrium with high levels of trust, cooperation reciprocity, engagement, and welfare are established, says Chris Freeman calls Changing Mates: Governing in a World of Rapid Change an Active Society creates a virtuous circle of continuous social progress.

One aspect of this society's Yankelovich's public-judgement model in which Public Policy Jurists of citizens are formed to judge public impact, utilizing new forms of interactive electronic on to sustain and continuing public Dialogue. Although the state cannot legislate social change, it can surely facilitate the development of new channels of communication. Dialogue is the single most powerful tool government has to help citizens engage the journey from raw opinion based on mass information to public judgment based on civic education. Such consensus building procedures could at least represent the electorate by about 70% of the electorate, when it becomes sufficiently informed and concerned as to endorse and promote strong public policies.

Similar procedures can be repeated from the local and national to the regional and international levels by confederate means of spatial and divisional jurisdiction. Some forms of functional federalism raise barriers in some areas and lowers them in others bringing about a pragmatic balance of power. Mathew Zacharias shows Bodhan Harasymiw in Federalism and the New World Order decry federalism's external economic instability which has produced tastes, growing, addictive, and catastrophic states. But federalism's political separation, economic expansion by trade liberalization, and cultural protection by local particularization combines an optimal cooperation and desirable competition for peaceful coexistence. For these reasons, large heterogeneous societies, like Canada, can do no better than federalism. If historical particularism or ethnic identity is part of the human condition, it cannot be suppressed, so all politics can do is contain it. Although permitting self-determination for every clan or tribe is a formula for disaster, Harriet Critchlow in Federalism and the New World Order states that minorities must be guaranteed their survival rights. Peter Leslie in Canada's Capacity: Governance in a Maturing Society agrees, arguing that history and ethnicity give people a frame of reference in time and space within which they can situate and realize themselves.

Given the human propensity to attain simultaneously personal salvation, national interest, and cosmopolitan values, the world will always be confronting various antagonisms and ambiguities. Under the circumstances, both Rogers Gibbins and David Whitefield in Federalism and the New World Order agree that only a federal system can tolerate such differences, at the same time as it promotes the human capacity to sustain multiple identities from the local to the global.

In any case, whether we look into the future through a local sociosystemic microscope or a global ecosystemic telescope, all we can see is a hazy fog of incongruent possibilities and contradictory potentials. Given the alternatives of the classic bureaucratic model to be either the public market system or its reciprocal community atonish, our choice there is rather circumscribed. Perhaps a synthesis of these would combine them in a flexible, selective and pragmatic way, as appropriate in different areas and needs. The challenge then, Donald Savoie repeats in Governance in a Changing Environment, is primarily of policy, not management. What it requires is to rethink what is desirable and possible of government, rather than attempt to reconcile its machinery along the latest fashion or fad.

This agenda requires pragmatism in the best and most demanding sense: a judicious selection of the various possible means of collective action based upon a rigorous assessment of their likely contributions to these goals. As both Richard Schultz and John Torpey argue in Canada's Century: Governance in a Maturing Society, the rediscovery of pragmatism should evaluate and act upon their effects on the actions of others, rather than on some dogmatic predetermination.

V. As presented here, the central dilemma of a social democracy is where to draw the line between the public and private domain. The question is: what is personal responsibility to be left to an open economy or free market and what is everybody's business to be decided by the policy and implemented by the state? Historically, most societies vacillate somewhere between the ideal laissez-faire and totalitarian extremes. In some places and for some time, the pendulum might swing dangerously close to either one pole or the other. In the words of the pendulum, it is likely to rest in the middle, until an external force pushes it towards one side or another again.

For the past hundred years, the general tendency was towards the socialist ideal, where a modern welfare state was constructed to take care of the individual from the cradle to the grave. Like all extremes however, collectivism came at too heavy a price, both materially and spiritually. By now, it is admitted that although some social responsibility and controllability is unavoidable, both as a means of regulating behavior and minimizing risk; we hardly need a reminder of the catastrophic failure of the grand illusion of centralized state planning. As a reaction to that failed God, the inevitable backlash is now hurling us to dismantle welfare statism and return to ruggish individualism. As a result, post-modern governance is supposed to correspond with the shift of oppressive bureaucracy and free the person from the shackles of a ubiquitous Big Brother. Having experienced the evils of the other extreme however, it is now claimed that the new government minimalism will avoid the pitfalls of the old maximalism and end up having the best of both worlds.

Yet, even if both extremes are judiciously avoided, Guy Peters, in Governance in a Changing Environment, considers it unlikely that any complementary combination can ever satisfy everybody. Incompatible means and contradictory ends ensure that our social enterprises will forever be suboptimal.

Since all values cannot be maximized either simultaneously or universally, sometimes a priority must be sacrificed to witheld others: security to liberty and equality to equity, or vice versa. Unfortunately, 'liberal egalism, frazzle has never be had altogether, so many of the worst effects of both the world are due to the wrenched excesses carried out in their name.

Similarly, contrary to consensus, competition and cooperation, are opposed sides of the same coin and cannot stand alone. These contraries are irreconcilable and irreducible; efforts to make them so have failed repeatedly and is bound to fail again. Therefore, all attempts to reach peaceful coexistence and tolerant diversity, although laudable and necessary, also produce disparities which undermine peace and stability, just as fighting for one's right and truth, confronts others who do the same for theirs.

So what's to be done? The only civilized answer for our interdependent world is politics: the classic game of dialectic compromise and accommodation par excellence.

This procedural, rather than substantive response, assumes too much in Canada's Capacity: Governance in a Maturing Society, the rediscovery of pragmatism should evaluate and act on their effects on the actions of others, rather than on some dogmatic predetermination.

Fatimah, Tewolde, and Dawt...

Three small reasons to support USVC village development programs in Africa and Asia.

Please make your pledge to USVC by calling: 1-800-5666 USVC and 303-9335 for Ottawa calls.

US VC
5200 S. bathtub, Evanston, IL 60201 (708) 326-9335
www.USVC.legit (5200 S. bathtub, Evanston, IL 60201)
My contact information is enclosed. (Postpaid cheques are welcome)

Name:
Address:
Phone:

(Please print and return fax. No. Registration number 006-BIG-0110)

March 1996